

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4454

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT CSCE SHUM UR US

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: (A) MOSCOW 2042 (B) MOSCOW 1751

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN TEN DAYS SINCE PRAVDA'S FEB 12

ARTICLE (REF A) ATTACKING WESTERN OPPONENTS OF DETENTE

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"CAMPAIGNING" ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND SOVIET DISSIDENTS,
SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF ISSUE HAS RISEN SEVERAL NOTCHES
BOTH IN OVERALL COVERAGE AND IN STRIDENCY OF DENUNCIATIONS
AND DEFENSE OF COMMUNIST RECORD. MOST NOTEWORTHY NEW
ELEMENT WAS PRAVDA'S FEB 20 COMMENT IMPLICITLY CRITICAL OF PRESIDENT
CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE FOR THEIR STATEMENTS ON ISSUE.
END SUMMARY.

2. PRIOR TO FEB 12 PRAVDA ARTICLE ATTACKING SOVIET DISSIDENTS AND WESTERN "CAMPAIGNERS" FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, SOVIET MEDIA WAS RESTRAINED IN ITS COVERAGE OF ISSUE. MAIN ATTENTION WAS GIVEN TO CHARTER 77 DEFENSE, AND "ANTI-CZECH" NATURE OF WESTERN CAMPAIGN. PRAVDA FOR MOST PART LIMITED ITSELF TO REPRINTING RUDE PRAVO ATTACKS AND USING REPORTS FROM WEST TO POINT OUT DEFICIENCIES IN WESTERN PRACTICES (REF B). ULSTER CASE, COINCIDENTLY BEING DISCUSSED IN STRASBOURG IN EUROPEAN COURT, PROVIDED BEST EXAMPLE AND WAS SUPPLEMENTED BY UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETINGS IN GENEVA WHERE ISRAELI PRACTICES IN OCCUPIED ARAB LANDS WERE BEING DEBATED. U.S. CAME IN FOR ITS SHARE OF CRITICISM ALSO, BOTH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS VIS-A-VIS BLACKS AND OTHER MINORITIES, AND FOR FAILURE TO PROVIDE "RIGHT TO A JOB" AND OTHER SOCIAL "RIGHTS" SUCH AS FREE MEDICAL CARE AND EDUCATION. DURING THIS STAGE NO DIRECT CRITICISM OF ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS APPEARED.

3. PRAVDA FEB 12 BLAST MARKED DISTINCT CHANGE IN TONE OF PRESS COVERAGE AND IN AMOUNT OF SPACE DEVOTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA. SUCCEEDING DAYS HAVE SEEN MEDIA CAMPAIGN OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS STRESSING THREAT TO ENTIRE BLOC INHERENT IN WESTERN "ANTI-COMMUNIST" CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT SOVIET AND EE DISSIDENTS. STORIES OF CZECH, ROMANIAN AND YUGOSLAV PROBLEMS SIMPLY SERVE AS INDICATORS OF HOW WIDE IS THREAT.

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4. SUBJECT HAS BECOME MOST FREQUENTLY TREATED TOPIC IN SOVIET MEDIA WITH PRAVDA AND ISVESTIYA PRINTING SEVERAL STORIES EACH DAY (IZVESTIYA ON FEB 14 HAD VIRTUALLY ENTIRE PAGE DEVOTED TO IT). REGIONAL AND SPECIALIZED PRESS ARE PICKING UP CHANT FROM THESE TWO LEADERS. HUMAN RIGHTS HAS BECOME ONE OF REGULAR THEMES OF RADIO COMMENTATORS AND IS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ON MAJOR RADIO NEWS REPORTS. TELEVISION COMMENTARY ON EVENING "VREMYA" NEWS PROGRAM FEB 18 SPOKE OF "WELL-ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN" WHICH SHIFTS FROM ONE SOCIALIST COUNTRY TO ANOTHER, AND CRITICIZED EXTENSIVE VOA COVERAGE OF DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES. TV SPECIAL FEB 16, WHICH APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN HASTILY PUT TOGETHER, FEATURED PANEL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW EXPERTS FROM BLOC COUNTRIES LED BY SOVIET PROFESSOR GRIGORIY TUNKIN, PRESIDENT OF SOVIET ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. ENTIRE SESSION FOCUSED ON HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN IN WEST ORGANIZED BY "ENEMIES OF SOCIALISM."

5. ON FEB 20 PRAVDA INCLUDED IN ITS SIGNED, AUTHORITATIVE INTERNATIONAL WEEK REVIEW COLUMN FIRST CRITICISM OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENTS. NOTING THAT PRESIDENT AND "HIS CLOSE ADVISORS" HAVE GOOD RECORD OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND ARMS CONTROL, COMMENTATOR VULIY YAKHONTOV WRITES THAT WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH AND THAT ONE JUDGES STATES BY THEIR "DEEDS". IN THIS REGARD, NEW ADMINISTRATION IS ACCUSED OF INTERFERING IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF SEVERAL SOCIALIST STATES UNDER BANNER OF DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS. SUCH EFFORTS, NOTES YAKHONTOV, HAVE BEEN "REJECTED". DEVELOPMENT OF U.S. SOVIET COOPERATION, HE SAYS, CAN ONLY TAKE PLACE BASED ON PRINCIPLES OF SOVEREIGNTY AND NON-INTERFERENCE AS STATED IN SOVIET-AMERICAN DOCUMENTS AND CSCE FINAL ACT.

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6. SINCE FEB 20 COMMENT WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING DIRECTLY ATTACKING NEW ADMINISTRATION. CENTRAL SOVIET MEDIA ARE STILL CAREFUL TO PROTRAY PRESIDENT AND HIS ADVISORS AS BEING POSITIVE ON OTHER MAJOR ISSUE, E.G. MILITARY SPENDING AND ARMS CONTROL. ALSO, THEY ARE NOT YET ATTRIBUTING TO NEW ADMINISTRATION ROLE AS INSTIGATOR OR BACKER OF PRESENT CAMPAIGN. FEB 23 PRAVDA DEVOTED COMMENTATOR'S COLUMN TO U.S. CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STRESSING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DOUBTS EXPRESSED BY SOME COMMENTATORS (RESTON, KENNAN AND CSM'S HARSCH) THAT PUBLIC STATEMENTS COULD SERVE INTERESTS OF BETTER U.S.- SOVIET RELATIONS. THIS IS FIRST REPLAY OF DOUBTS OR DISSIDENT EXPRESSED IN U.S. ABOUT WISDOM OF TAKING PUBLIC STANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

7. COMMENT: WHILE THE TONE AND AMOUNT OF COVERAGE INDICATE HOW SERIOUSLY SOVIETS ARE TAKING THIS ISSUE, LOGICAL INCONSISTENCIES IN THAT MEDIA TREATMENT SHOW HOW DIFFICULT A SUBJECT IT IS FOR THEM TO HANDLE. THEY CONDEMN VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN NON-COMMUNIST WORLD, WHILE FOCUSING MAIN ARGUMENT IN DEFENSE OF COMMUNIST PRACTICES ON SOCIAL BENEFITS RATHER THAN HUMAN RIGHTS AS SUCH. ALSO, THEIR ATTACK OF OTHERS' FAULTS CLEARLY INVOLVES THEM IN COMMENTARIES ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER STATES (E.G. UK (ULSTER)), SOUTH AFRICA, CHILE, U.S. AND ISRAEL) WHILE THEY REJECT ANY SIMILAR COMMENTARIES ON COMMUNIST INTERNAL PRACTICES. THUS, WHILE THE SOVIET PRESS CAMPAIGN IS EXTENSIVE, WE SUSPECT THAT DISCERNING SOVIET READERS CAN SEE THE CHINKS IN THE WALL, ESPECIALLY WHEN SOVIET TREATMENT IS SUPPLEMENTED WITH WESTERN RADIO REPORTS.

8. THIS MEDIA CAMPAIGN COULD, OF COURSE, BE EVEN MORE HARD-HITTING. THUS FAR, FOR EXAMPLE, NEITHER THE PRESIDENT NOR THE SECRETARY HAS BEEN DIRECTLY AND PERSONALLY CRITICIZED. ALSO, INDIVIDUAL SOVIET LEADERS HAVE NOT YET SPOKEN OUT ON THIS ISSUE. BUT THE SOVIET PROPAGANDA MACHINE HAS MOVED FROM REPLAYING FOREIGN COVERAGE TO GENERATING ITS OWN MATERIAL. AND THE LINE SET BY THE FEBRUARY 12 PRAVDA EDITORIAL HAS SINCE BEEN UNYIELDING: THE WESTERN CAMPAIGN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE STEMS SOLELY FROM ENEMIES OF DETENTE AND FOES OF "SOCIALISM."
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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